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ABSTRACT

This guide provides step-by-step activities for facilitators to run a discussion and planning meeting with a group of people interested in learning about and taking action related to the Adult Literacy Summit Action Agenda. It is intended for groups such as literacy coalitions, program staff, state-level staff, or other governmental and nonprofit organizations involved in supporting the field of adult literacy. The guide can be used to facilitate a 2- or 3-hour session. The 2-hour session is for a group that wants to become familiar with the Summit Action Agenda and think, in general terms, about how it can help them plan for action. The 3-hour session is for a group that also wants to do concrete action planning based on the Summit Action Agenda. Introductory materials include assumptions about the meeting; the guide as a script for the facilitator; preparing for the meeting; and materials. Components of each of seven activities are title, participants (whole group, pairs, etc.), and time; purpose; materials; steps; visual aids; and facilitator note. The seven activities are (1) welcome, introductions, background; (2) Summit Action Agenda goal; (3) priorities and considerations; (4) outcomes; (5) prioritizing outcomes and actions; (6) individual and organizational action if the 2-hour version or focusing the list if the 3-hour version; and (7) planning for action. Handouts are appended. (YLB)

From the Margins to the Mainstream: An Action Agenda for Literacy

Guide for a Two- or Three-Hour Group Discussion and Planning Meeting

Developed by
National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL)
and
World Education

Introduction

This guide provides information for facilitators to run a discussion and planning meeting with a group of people interested in learning about and taking action related to the Adult Literacy Summit Action Agenda. It is intended for groups such as literacy coalitions, program staff, state-level staff, or other governmental and non-profit organizations involved in supporting the field of adult literacy.

The purpose of this discussion and planning meeting is to orient groups to the document *From the Margins to the Mainstream*, the Action Agenda that emerged from the February, 2000 National Literacy Summit, and to help the group plan for taking individual and organizational action to support the Agenda.

This guide can be used to facilitate a 2-hour or a 3-hour session, depending on the purpose of the group. The two-hour session is for a group that wants to become familiar with the Summit Action Agenda and think, in general terms, about how it can help them plan for action. The three-hour session is for a group that also wants to do concrete action planning based on the Action Agenda.

For either the two- or three-hour version of the meeting, all steps in this guide are applicable and identical until the final activity (#6). At that point in the guide, the two-hour meeting would begin to wrap up, using activity 6A. The three-hour meeting would then continue, beginning with activity 6B to plan for specific action.

Our assumptions about this meeting

1. The workshop is intended for groups that work together: program staff, Workforce Investment Boards and other interagency groups, state-level ABE staff, etc. These are groups that meet regularly, know one another, and are able to follow-up this session with further planning and implementation.
2. The workshop is designed for 12-15 participants.

3. Participants bring a range of background knowledge about the Action Agenda. We have noted (in text boxes) where adaptations might be made for particular audiences.
4. Participants should be aware, before the meeting, that the meeting engages them in thinking about individual and/or organizational action planning.
5. Participants do not need to agree with every item in the agenda, although it's important to consider whether or not they feel they can be part of a coalition of educators who are working toward this agenda.

The role of a script

This meeting guide provides a model for taking participants through an interactive process of discovering how their own concerns and priorities are reflected in the Action Agenda, and of considering the ways they can participate (individually and organizationally) in this movement for change. The guide is scripted to help facilitators lead the group through a process of discussing a large amount of material. It is meant to support practitioners who may have limited experience in facilitating groups. It is not meant to constrain you, the facilitator, from explaining things in your own words or tailoring the plan to fit your context, and we encourage you to do so.

Before the Meeting

It is important that the group makes an informed decision, before the meeting, about whether they are simply **discussing** the Action Agenda (two-hour meeting) or whether they are also **planning** for action (three-hour meeting). A group that wants to plan for action may also organize the meeting in two parts, best separated by no more than two weeks, so that they may have time to reflect on their discussion before making specific plans for action.

To prepare for this work, before the meeting the participant group should consider the following questions:

- Who should be involved in the planning? (Preferably all of those who would be taking action should be present at the meeting.)
- How can we get all perspectives (learners, program staff, administrators, etc.) into the planning process?
- How does this process connect to other plans our organization has?

The answers to these questions will have implications for who should be present at the meeting and the type of commitment the organization's leaders would have for the process.

It is desirable for participants to have read the Action Agenda before the meeting, but the activities are written with the assumption that they have not.

Materials

The meeting will require that each participant have a copy of *From the Margins to the Mainstream: An Action Agenda for Literacy*. Copies of the Action Agenda can be obtained in the following ways:

- To download it from the internet: Visit www.nifl.gov/coalition/nclhome.htm
- To order paper copies: Call 1-800-228-8813 or Fax 1-301-470-1244
- To order paper copies: Send your request by mail to ED Pubs, P.O. Box 1398, Jessup, MD 20794-1398

The facilitator should have on hand markers, blank newsprint, post-its, sticky dots, and tape.

Some activities during the meeting require newsprints that should be prepared beforehand, including:

- Summit timeline;
- workshop agenda and objectives;
- newsprint Venn diagram of the 3 priorities;
- the 15 outcomes written on 15 strips of newsprint;
- activity instructions

Within the guide, we show these pre-prepared newsprints in shaded text boxes.

This Summit Action Agenda: Group Discussion and Planning Meeting Guide was developed by Andy Nash and Cristine Smith.

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Group Discussion and Planning Meeting

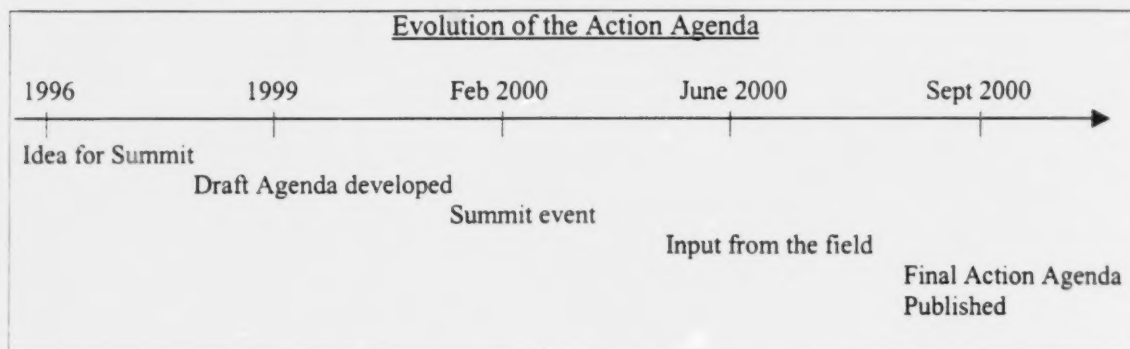
Activities

Activity 1: Welcome, introductions, and background (whole group, 10 min)

Purpose: Familiarize participants with background and purpose of meeting.

Materials: Agenda and Objectives, Action Agenda timeline and goals newsprints.

1. Welcome and introductions, if necessary.
2. Review the objectives of the session:
 - a. To orient participants to the Action Agenda.
 - b. To support participants in finding areas of the Agenda that reflect their own priorities.
 - c. To think about how they can support that work individually and organizationally.
3. Ask who has read the Agenda; make sure every participant has a copy.
4. Facilitator reviews the origin of the Action Agenda (the evolution of the Summit, the process of building consensus, why the field of adult literacy needs an action agenda, the need to act on it). Post the following timeline and goals, written on newsprints, and talk through the key events, using the text below as a guide.



Evolution of Goals

1996 - National Education Goal 6: Achieve universal literacy by the year 2000.

Pre-Summit Goal: By the year 2010, the United States will be among the most literate nations in the world.

Post-Summit Goals:

- 1) By the year 2010, the U.S. will be the most literate nation in the world, with 70% of the population achieving literacy at or above the NALS Level 3; OR
- 2) Adults in every community in the U.S. will benefit from a system of high-quality literacy services that helps them reach their full potential as workers, family-members, citizens and lifelong learners.

Final Action Agenda Goal:

By 2010, a system of high quality adult literacy, language, and lifelong learning services will help adults in every community make measurable gains toward achieving their goals as family members, workers, citizens, and lifelong learners.

Talk for the timeline: In 1996, a group of people from NCSALL, OVAE, NIFL, and other organizations in the adult literacy field began talking about how the field needed to define where it was and where it needed to go. The field needed a unifying goal that could replace the outdated National Education Goal 6 (on "Goals" newsprint).

This group of organizations planned a February 2000 summit meeting of 200 invited representatives (researchers, policymakers, administrators, teachers, students, etc.), with the goal of building consensus on a new plan of action for the field. They hoped that this goal would: 1) orient funders and politicians to the needs of the field, and 2) galvanize consensus in the field around an agenda for action.

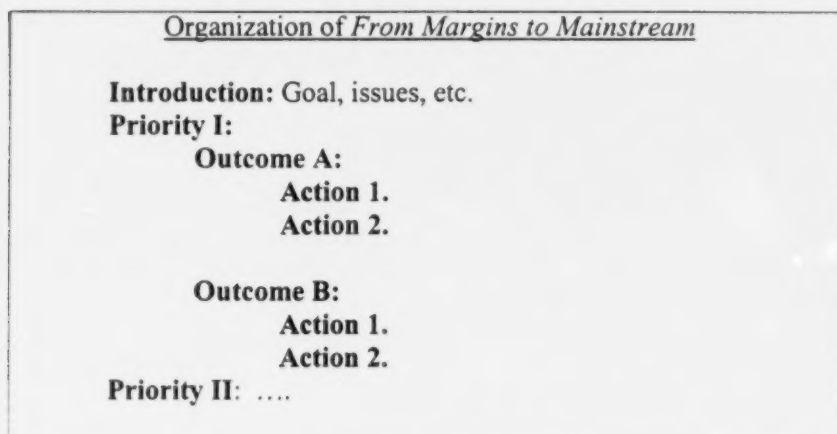
The Summit participants discussed a draft goal (on "Goals" newsprint) and position paper, and provided feedback. Consensus was difficult to reach because the field is diverse and holds varied perspectives on the issues as well as the ways to resolve them. There were also competing views about the wisdom of making those issues public: does naming difficulties and limitations build a case for more funding or threaten funding?

The document that was drafted from the Summit feedback laid out the problematic issues and identified strategies for addressing those problems, given adequate resources. The new draft agenda also included two new versions of the goal (on "Goals" newsprint):

Feedback on the document was collected on-line, through regional workshops, and through an open invitation to individuals and organizations. The document was revised and presented to the field on National Literacy Day, September 8, 2000 (on "Goals" newsprint).

As you can see, the final goal has evolved to, hopefully, a consensus vision that can guide a system reform agenda for the field.

5. Explain the organization of the Action Agenda booklet and have participants flip through it as you describe the outline format of priorities, outcomes, and actions. Post the following newsprint for visual support:



We'll note where we are on this outline as we examine key pieces of the Agenda.

Activity 2: The Action Agenda goal (pairs and whole group, 10 min)

Purpose: To reflect on and evaluate the new consensus goal.

Materials: Goal newsprint; blank newsprint; color markers.

1. In pairs (the person next to you), read the new summit goal (on newsprint). Discuss for five minutes: What aspects of the new goal do you support? What reservations do you have? What word or phrase stands out for you as something that will help move the field forward?
2. Back in the whole group, volunteers share their words or phrases and why they chose them. Underline these, in a contrasting color, as they are named.
3. Remind the group that we may not embrace everything about the goal, or the Action Agenda, but that we can

Facilitator note: Each step of this activity is 5 minutes. This kind of discussion could fill a much longer timeslot, especially if people try to revise the goal. The objective, however, is not to revise the goal, but to identify the aspects of the goal that we relate to and support.

Read or paraphrase the purpose of the activity, so that participants are clear about the objective.

probably find our own priorities reflected somewhere in it and can use it as a framework for coordinating all of our diverse efforts for system reform.

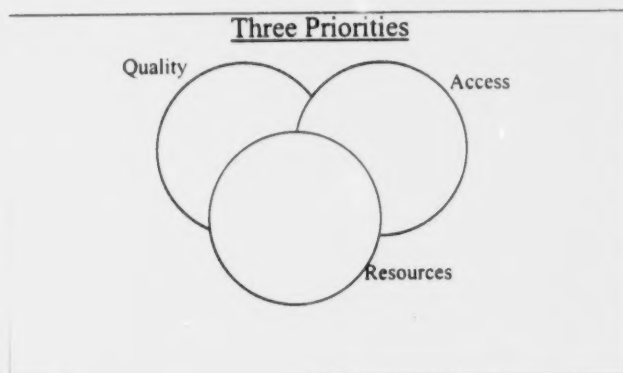
Activity 3: The priorities and considerations (whole group, 15 min)

Purpose: To find where our own priorities and concerns are captured in the Action Agenda.

Materials: post-its, Venn diagram newsprint.

Facilitator note: Read or paraphrase the purpose of the activity, so that participants are clear about the objective.

1. Pass around post-its and ask everyone to take two. Explain that we're going to brainstorm our own priorities and then review what's in the agenda. Give people 3 minutes to write, in a short phrase, individually and silently:
 - On one post-it: **one way the system could function better for adult students.**
 - On the other post-it: **one way the system could function better for their program or organization.**
2. Explain that the new action agenda is organized by 3 overarching priorities: QUALITY, ACCESS, RESOURCES. Name these three priorities and use them to label the Venn diagram you've drawn on a newsprint (as shown). Explain that you've created a Venn diagram because many of the field's needs overlap the categories.



3. Then go around the room and invite each person to read their post-its (without elaboration) and place them on the priority(ies) that best capture their concerns. Was there a "home" for every post-it? If not, hold out these post-its while we look at some other considerations.
4. Explain that, during the Summit, several issues and considerations were named that cut across the priorities. They are important to keep in mind as we think about

ways we need to reform the adult language and literacy system. Ask a volunteer to read aloud the three paragraphs that describe the issues and the programs/populations (p. 3 in *Margins to Mainstream*, titled Action Agenda, beginning with "Several significant issues..." and ending with "...poverty and racism require particular attention..."); encourage others to read along silently, if they wish. As the text is being read, list the issues and programs/populations on a sheet of newsprint as they are read. "Poverty and racism," named at the end of the text, should be listed as an "issue." The newsprint will look like this:

<u>Issues</u> Student involvement Communications Partnerships Technology Poverty and racism <u>Programs and Populations</u> Family and workplace literacy programs ESOL Learning disabilities Corrections Older adults (Additional considerations)

5. Ask if any of the post-its that did not have a home with any of the priority areas might be better captured by an item on this newsprint. Place them where they belong. If any remain, add an item titled "Additional considerations" at the bottom of the newsprint and place the post-its there. We'll return to these later, as a check that we're addressing our basic concerns when we begin to plan our own action.

Activity 4: The outcomes (whole group, 10 min)

Purpose: To familiarize everyone with the 15 outcomes.

Materials: Outcomes on strips of newsprint; newsprints from prior activity.

1. Individual outcomes (without letter identifiers) are written on large strips of newsprint and distributed to participants. (There should be fifteen strips for the fifteen outcomes; see "Outcomes by Priority Handout). Each participant will read her/his outcome aloud and, in consultation with the group, name the priority that it goes under.
2. A volunteer "game show host" will refer to a copy of the "Outcomes by Priority" handout in order to judge whether the outcome has been properly placed. Then the facilitator tapes the outcome where it belongs on the Venn diagram.
3. Note that the outcomes describe what achieving the agenda priorities looks like. There may be other outcomes, as well, but these are the ones we'll be working from today.

Facilitator note: This is the only activity that focuses on the Action Agenda content without inviting comment. If the group is already familiar with these outcomes, you can skip this activity. The activity engages participants in making decisions about how to categorize the outcomes. It is designed this way to help participants process a lot of information by interacting with it in manageable pieces.

Read or paraphrase the purpose of the activity, so that participants are clear about the objective.

Activity 5: Prioritizing outcomes and actions (small groups, 45 min)

Purpose: To generate a pool of 9 actions that are important to the work of this group and from which participants can develop individual and/or organizational action plans.

Materials: "Outcomes by Priority" handout, task instructions on newsprint, Action Agendas, blank newsprint for each group, sticky dots (if needed).

1. Divide the group into 3 small groups, which will each work on one of the priority areas. Explain that you'll try to give people their preferences, but will need to ask folks to be flexible so that we divide fairly evenly. Ask for a show of hands by interest in each priority area, and then create groups. In each group, ask for a timekeeper and newsprint scribe.

Facilitator note: Read or paraphrase the purpose of the activity, so that participants are clear about the objective.

2. Distribute the "Outcomes by Priority," and the "Small Group Task" handouts. Also note that, for the purposes of this activity, the participants should think about the organization of which they are a part.

Give each group the post-its that had been placed on their priority on the Venn diagram, and invite them to come up and review the post-its that are sitting on overlapping priorities.

3. After 20 minutes in the small group, reconvene the whole group. Each group will have 5 minutes to report out:
 - a sampling of the kinds of actions that are listed in the Action Agenda for the outcome(s) you reviewed
 - your rationale for selecting your three priority actions

Facilitator note:

For a two-hour session continue on to Activity 6A. Use the remaining 30 minutes to complete Activity 6A, Wrap up and Evaluation.

For a three-hour session go directly to Activity 6B (or stop here if you plan to organize a separate action planning meeting within two weeks). Use the remaining 90 minutes to complete Activity 6B, Activity 7, Wrap up and Evaluation.

Activity 6A: Individual and organizational action: 2-hour version (small groups, 15 min)

Purpose: For participants to plan next steps for taking action on the Action Agenda.
Materials: None.

1. Divide into natural working groups (how you work together in your organizations). These groups may be of varied sizes. Consider the nine actions that have been recommended.
2. In this group, discuss two things:
 - In what ways could your program or organization advance these actions?
 - In what ways could you, individually, advance these actions?

*Facilitator note:
Read or paraphrase the purpose of the activity, so that participants are clear about the objective.*

Wrap up (whole group, 10min): Reconvene the whole group. Ask each small group to share discussions and ideas. Then, ask the whole group to discuss next steps for the group.

Evaluation (whole group, 5min): Ask the whole group to give feedback about what was helpful about this meeting and how it could be improved, for future meetings.

Activity 6B: Focusing the list: 3-hour version (individuals, 30 min)

Purpose: To narrow the number of actions down according to criteria.

Materials: Pre-prepared newsprint with "urgent," "doable," "impact" criteria.

1. To narrow down the list of actions from 9 to 3 (as the basis for some concrete planning), individuals will evaluate each action according to the following criteria:

- How urgent is it?
- How doable is it?
- How much impact will it have (for students, for teachers, for programs)?

*Facilitator note:
Read or paraphrase
the purpose of the
activity, so that
participants are
clear about the
objective.*

2. Ask participants to make individual notes to themselves, using the following outline (post on newsprint):

<u>Action</u>	<u>Urgent?</u>	<u>Doable?</u>	<u>Impact?</u>
1.			
2.			
3.			
etc.			

3. Go around the room, giving each person 30 seconds to say which action best meets all three criteria, or, if they feel that a different action would be their first choice for mobilizing around, why they chose it. On newsprint, keep track of each person's "vote" for his or her priority action. Tally the top three vote-getters.

Activity 7: Planning for action (45 minutes, small groups)

Purpose: To develop specific action plans for each action the group will take.

Materials: "Planning Worksheet," 3x5 index cards, markers.

1. Divide into natural working groups (how you work together in your organizations). These groups may be of varied sizes. Consider the three actions

that have been prioritized. Select one of these actions and use the 'Planning Worksheet' to begin planning how the group might begin moving forward on it.

2. Use the following process to complete the action grid on the "Planning Worksheet":

- Give everyone in the group a bunch of 3x5 index cards and a marker.
- Give everyone three minutes to write down the steps they think should be followed to carry out the action, one step per index card. Explain that everyone will work alone at first, then put their ideas together. (Note: The first step in many action plans is to gather information, in which case you'll need to clarify what information needs to be gathered.)
- Have each person lay their index cards out on a table so everyone can see them. There will probably be some duplication between different people's cards; take duplicated steps out. Talk about the steps remaining and try to put them in order. When you're done, ask everyone to look again to see if anything is missing, and add if necessary.
- Transfer the sequenced index cards to the first column of the Action Plan newsprint.
- Then, working together, fill in the remaining columns on the chart. Remember that resources can include money, materials, and/or time.

Wrap up (whole group, 10 min): Reconvene the whole group. Ask each small group to share their action plan with the others, by providing a short oral report. With the whole group, discuss the following post-planning questions:

- Are these consecutive steps or can they be worked on, by the group, simultaneously?
- Is work manageably distributed?
- Are the timeframes realistic?
- Is there a system in place for the group to meet, evaluate progress, revise plans, etc.?
- Has the plan adequately represented all needed perspectives? If not, how can you include more perspectives in a review of this plan?

Evaluation (whole group, 5min): Ask the whole group to give feedback about what was helpful about this meeting and how it could be improved, for future meetings.

Outcomes by Priority Handout

RESOURCES:

A: Changes in existing federal and state laws and policies to expand and enhance services for adults in the adult education, language, and literacy system.

B: Federal and state appropriations increase to levels sufficient to support access and quality in the adult education, language, and literacy system.

C: Support services are widely available for adult education.

D: The private sector invests in lifelong learning opportunities for adults in the workplace and community.

E: Public-private partnerships support a variety of targeted communications activities to raise awareness about the adult education, language, and literacy system.

ACCESS:

A: Strong local information and referral systems help students easily find appropriate programs to continue their learning, as well as support services such as child care, transportation, learning disabilities screening, and counseling.

B: Students, providers, and other stakeholders know of the various learning opportunities available to help students meet their goals.

C: All students receive the support they need to take advantage of learning opportunities.

D: Adult education, language, and literacy instruction can be accessed anywhere and at any time.

QUALITY:

A: Program goals reflect the concerns of all stakeholders in the community.

B: All programs use content standards and curriculum frameworks that focus on the knowledge and skills adults need to carry out life roles and meet community needs.

C: All programs have a systematic approach to quality improvement.

D: Paid and volunteer staff in all programs are involved in varied professional development activities to upgrade their knowledge and skills.

E: A strong research and development capacity, focused on teaching and learning, develops knowledge and tools that are responsive to the needs of the field.

F: Students are involved as primary stakeholders and full partners in every aspect of program operations.

Small Group Task Handout

Your group should spend 5 minutes for each of steps 1-4.

1. Consider the mission of your program or organization, as well as the ideas you included on your post-its. With these in mind, which 1-2 outcomes most closely match your organization's concerns?
2. Using the highest priority outcome, generate a list of actions your group could take. You might do this by first brainstorming your own action ideas (and then looking at the Action Agenda to supplement these) or you might look at the action listed in the Agenda first and then add your own ideas. The actions are listed on pages 4-9 in the Action Agenda.
3. Drawing from the combined list of ideas, discuss which 3 actions you would recommend to the full group. If consensus is not easy to find, dot vote with 3 dots each. (See instructions below.) Write your three chosen actions on newsprint.
4. Look back at the list of issues, programs and populations and your collection of post-its. How have they been addressed in your chosen actions? Revise your action list if necessary.

Dot voting is a method of selection that allows participants to cast votes for more than one option. In this activity, each voter has 3 dots that they will use to vote for their three preferred actions on the list. Ask them to come up and place their dots next to the action items they are choosing. Count the votes to identify the 3 selected actions.

Planning Worksheet

1. The action we're focusing on is _____.

2. This is our priority because _____.

3. Our group brings these strengths/weaknesses to the work:

Strengths

Weaknesses

Action Steps	Who's responsible?	By when?	Support or Resources needed	Benchmarks*
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				

*Benchmarks answer the questions: What will it look like when this step is implemented and completed? What will you look for as signs of progress along the way?

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